Ymddiriedolaeth
Ddiwylliannol
Cultural Trust

Blaenau Gwent
County Borough Council

QUARTER 4
PERFORMANCE REPORT

for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

2025–26

This report summarises activities undertaken by Awen Cultural Trust during **Quarter 4** of 2025 / 2026 in support of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Corporate Objectives. It includes our key performance measures as well as some case studies and customer feedback that help illustrate impact.

Quarterly Summary:

THE MET

During Quarter 4, The Met continued to play a vital role in providing high-quality, inclusive and accessible cultural experiences for the communities of Blaenau Gwent and beyond.

Our programme reflected a strong commitment to social inclusion, community wellbeing and participation, particularly for audiences who may otherwise face barriers to engaging with the arts. This can be seen in the customer maps below and an increased use of the Hynt scheme, which provides free access for carers to arts and performance venues.

A key focus this quarter was our monthly relaxed film screenings and Golden Melodies sing-along sessions, which created welcoming and supportive spaces for people living with dementia and adults with profound and multiple physical and/or sensory disabilities. These sessions were attended by residents from care settings including Cwrt Mytton Care Home in Abertillery, and Bert Denning Centre and Lakeview in Brynmawr through Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Community Options day service provision. The success of these events was evident in the visible enjoyment and engagement of participants, alongside consistently positive feedback from support workers and care home managers, who highlighted the events' impact on wellbeing and social connection.

Community access was further strengthened through our regular programme of Free Music Friday events, which continued to attract a loyal audience. By removing cost as a barrier, these daytime events enabled families, older residents and those from lower-income households to enjoy live music in a friendly and safe environment. The quality of performers and relaxed atmosphere encouraged attendance from people who may not normally engage with arts events, helping to reduce social isolation and create shared experiences.

Live music remains a cornerstone of The Met's offer. This quarter, we reinforced our reputation for delivering high-quality music events at affordable prices, ensuring live performance remains accessible. Well-attended tribute bands ***Nothing but a Good Time*** and ***Kast Off Kinks*** (featuring original band members) attracted audiences from across Blaenau Gwent, South Wales and parts of England (see map below).

The popularity of these events demonstrates the value of providing professional cultural experiences for local audiences who do not wish to travel far or pay premium prices.

The Met continued its long-standing support of local amateur and youth theatre groups, providing opportunities for performance on a professional stage. Theatre Adhoc's ***Now Wait a Minute***, written by Julia Lewis from Abertillery, and Abertillery Youth Drama Musical Society's production of ***Annie Jr***. were both well attended by the community. These productions not only entertained local audiences but also aligned with Awen's strategic commitment to widening participation, inspiring new performers, and developing creative skills.

In partnership working, The Met collaborated with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Town Centre Manager to host a large-scale animal experience event, which attracted over 400 people. This interactive event offered hands-on learning experiences with animals including snakes, spiders and meerkats; helping children and families develop understanding of animal behaviour, welfare and conservation awareness while drawing significant footfall into Abertillery town centre. The success of the event has led to plans for further collaborative activities throughout the year.

Looking ahead, preparations are underway for The Met to host the annual Rock and Blues Festival, continuing a local tradition that dates back to the Abertillery Blues Festival first held in 2005. Through partnership with Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council, this programme will ensure rock and blues music remain a valued and accessible part of the area's cultural life. Additionally, work is progressing to strengthen relationships with Abertillery Learning Campus, recognising the importance of early access to the arts for children and young people in Blaenau Gwent, supporting creativity, wellbeing and inclusion from an early age.

"Great to have a venue like this in a small town, great entertainment and lovely staff."

"Absolutely beautiful venue and I will definitely be coming back to watch something else in future."

"Great venue, great staff, great value for money and an all-round good night out"

"Every event I have attended at the Met has been superb!"

"Great artists great local venue great value for money."

MATTHEW, BLAINA

When Matthew first walked into The Met for the Awen Skills Theatrical Skills and Pyrotechnics training workshops, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in partnership with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, he wasn't sure what to expect. He had always been curious about theatre but stepping into a professional venue felt like a big step.

The workshops became a pivotal moment for Matthew. The sessions encouraged him to speak up, work with a team, and trust his instincts. The pyrotechnics training opened a completely new world, and Matthew says it was the first time he felt he truly belonged in a creative space. That boost of confidence didn't fade when the course ended.

Matthew decided to join one of the local theatre communities, Abertillery Amateur Dramatics and Musical Society, something he never imagined himself doing before the training workshops. He's now preparing to step onto the same stage where his journey began, having secured a small role in AADMS's production of Jekyll & Hyde, taking place at The Met in June.

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Awen Cultural Trust is registered in Wales as a company limited by guarantee.